



United States Mint Resumes Production In Philadelphia

April 18, 2002

Six-week Safety Improvement Period Complete

WASHINGTON — The United States Mint today announced that it has resumed production of circulating coinage at its Philadelphia facility.

Production at the facility has been suspended since March 4, to ensure that all safety concerns cited in a recent report by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) had been addressed. While the Philadelphia facility had either permanently addressed or taken effective interim measures for 137 of the 139 items, United States Mint Director Henrietta Holsman Fore ordered a top-to-bottom review of the facility to initiate the steps necessary to create a showcase for best practices in the public sector.

“The safety and well-being of every employee across the United States Mint is our primary concern,” said Director Fore. “Not only have we addressed the specific items brought to our attention by OSHA, but we have also gone beyond these recommendations to begin the transformation of the Philadelphia facility into a model of industrial safety. I am pleased to announce that circulating production is now running.”

During the six weeks while production was suspended, employees reported to work to exclusively address safety at the facility, participating in re-training on safety programs and procedures, and working to improve the cleanliness and hygiene standards of the facility. Numismatic production resumed on March 22.

Safety experts were brought in to conduct wall-to-wall inspections, and professional job hazard analysts conducted a comprehensive review of every task performed at the Philadelphia facility. Material safety data sheets were crosschecked with equipment and material, and all safety programs were updated — including specific re-training for electricians and employees. The status of all safety equipment was reviewed and physical changes needed to reconfigure work areas for increased safety were evaluated. Procedures for restarting production also were reviewed to assess system efficiency, and new training on fall procedures was put in place.

“Safety is the top priority,” said Scott Myers, Deputy Associate Director for Manufacturing, “and teamwork has been the key to this effort. Union employees and management worked together to make necessary safety improvements while improving the organization and appearance of the facility.”

“Remarkable” is how Greg Wikberg, President of the National Mint Council, described the process. “In my discussions with the local president, both Bill and the employees were impressed with what they have been able to accomplish in such a short period of time,” Wikberg added. Bill Beckham, President of AFGF Local 1023 at the Philadelphia facility, agreed. “It involved all the employees here. Because the process made them more aware of certain issues, we have a safe and better place to work.”

The six weeks of concentrated focus was especially important, according to Rob Robidoux, manager of the Philadelphia facility. “It gave us time to take our safety efforts to new heights. The level of safety knowledge and awareness has been significantly raised in all employees,” Robidoux said.

On May 3, 2002, Director Fore will escort officials from OSHA, the United States Treasury Department, and Bobby Harnage, President of the Association of Federal Government Employees, through the improved Philadelphia facility.

“Because of its transformation,” Fore added, “the Philadelphia facility now has a strong foundation we will use to benchmark United States Mint operations against world-class excellence.”

During the six-week improvement effort in Philadelphia, the United States Mint continued to meet orders for coinage without interruption by increasing production at the Denver facility.

United States Mint facilities tours in Philadelphia and Denver have been closed to the public since the tragedies on September 11. Public tours are expected to resume soon.

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